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August 2020  
Vol. 2, Issue 8.

## VICTORY

### SOUL ORCHESTRA

Two's company, and three's a crowd. But eleven, in the right key, can be magic.

**14**

## THE

### BOBBY LEES

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**18**

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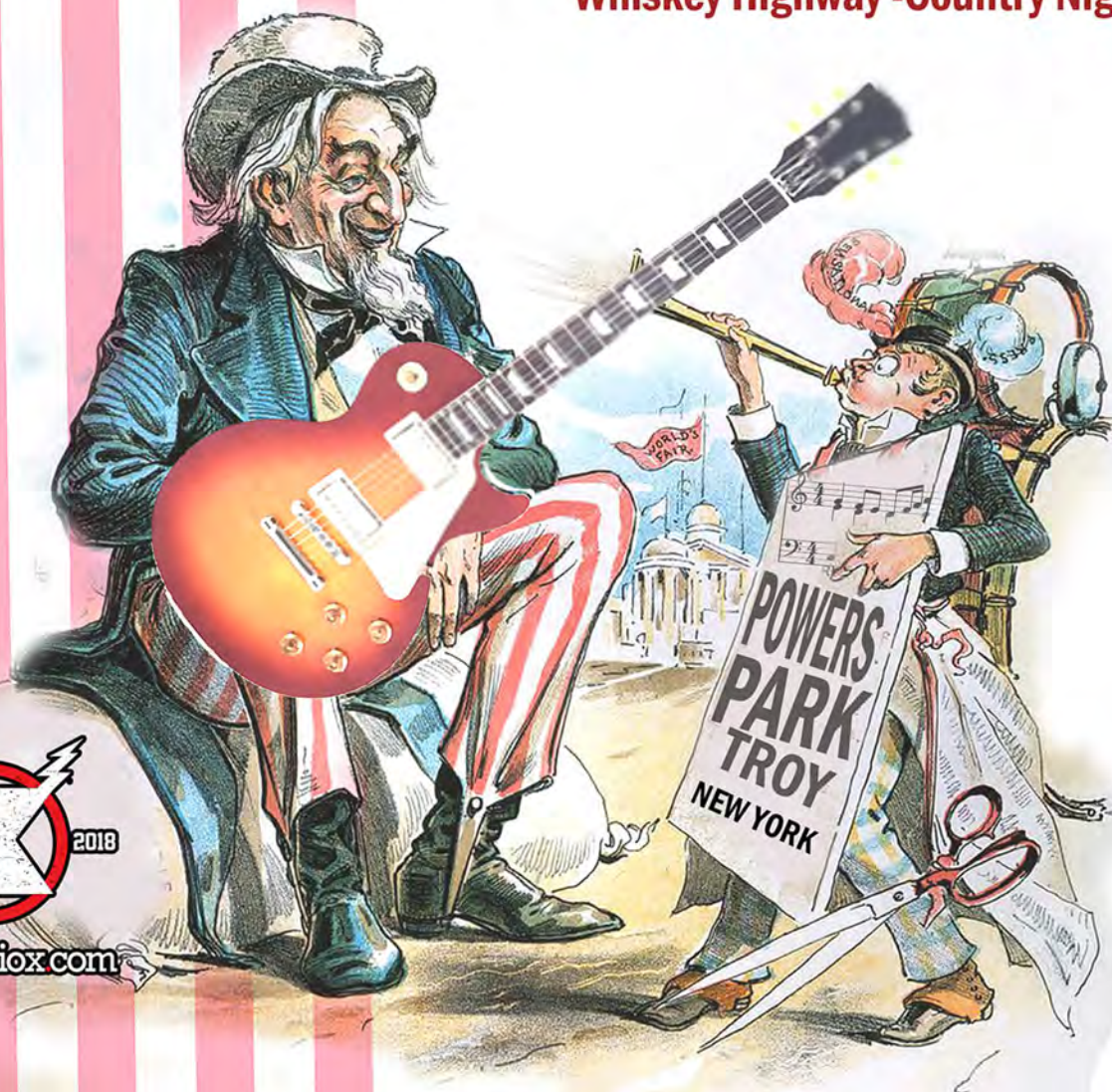


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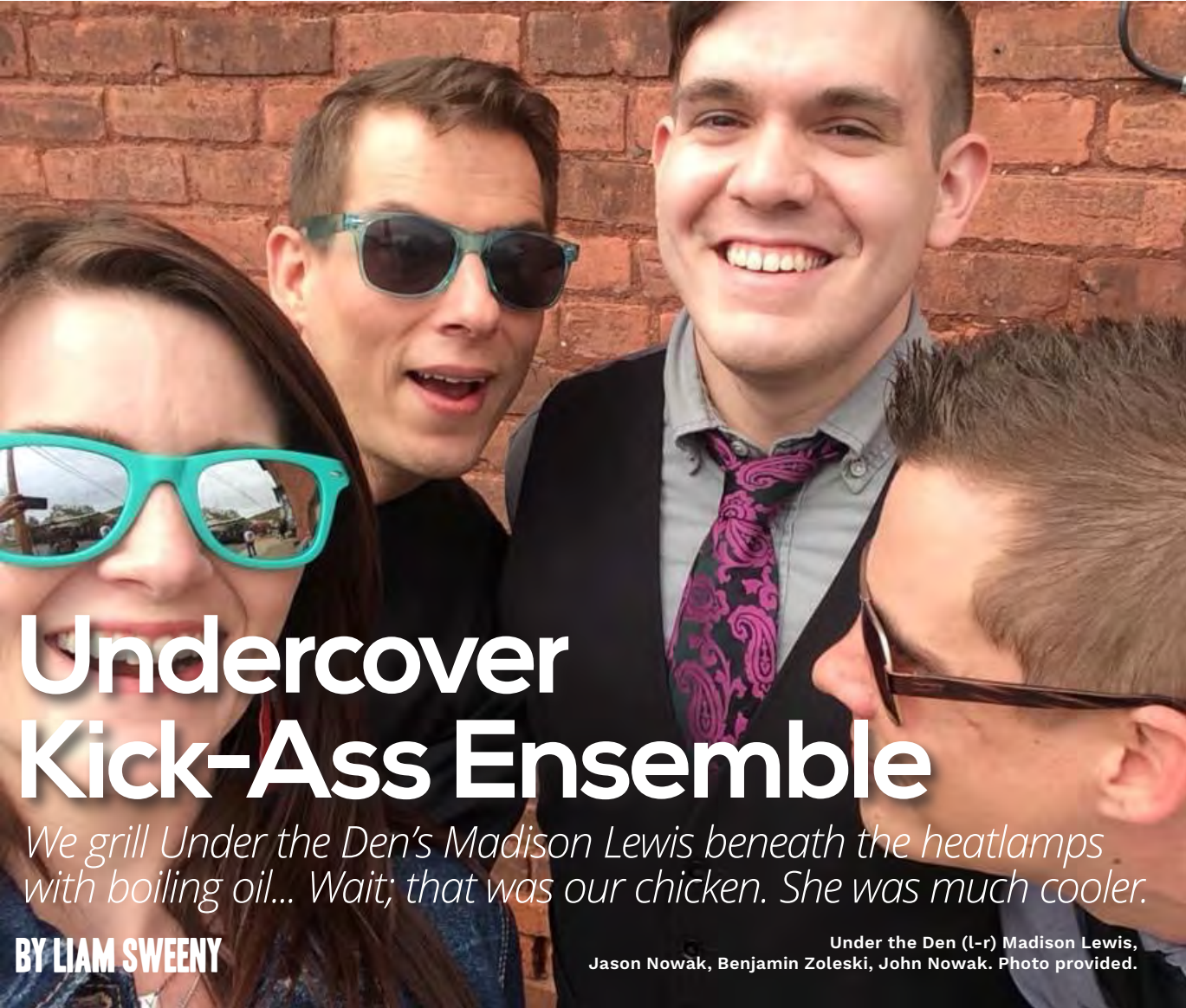




**VICTORY SOUL ORCHESTRA**  
A celebration of notes and measures marks Victory Soul Orchestra's musical mission. You're invited.  
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**THE BOBBY LEES**  
Passion and fire brand this group of players as they ready themselves to set upon the land, crowd by crowd.  
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Observations and Ramblings.....12



# Undercover Kick-Ass Ensemble

*We grill Under the Den's Madison Lewis beneath the heatlamps with boiling oil... Wait; that was our chicken. She was much cooler.*

**BY LIAM SWEENEY**

Under the Den (l-r) Madison Lewis, Jason Nowak, Benjamin Zoleski, John Nowak. Photo provided.

**C**overing the greats is a hard gig, and even harder is doing that while putting out your own songs. But some bands pull it off, and when that happens, fans get the best of both worlds. We talk with Melanie Lewis from Under the Den about that balancing act.

RRX: When the band started, there was a spark; there always is. Otherwise, why play? So take us to the where, where it first happened. Was it instant, or did it grow? If you had to come up with one thing you all took home that day that told you that you had something worth pursuing, what was it?

ML: From the first time we played together we all seemed to feel a connection or shared vibe, we get along very well which made working together easy and fun, but after writing, "Let's Go to Paris (the World Ends)," we all knew we had not just something worth committing to, but also something worth hearing.

RRX: There's no one way to write a song. Even putting paper to pen is giving way to sending yourself the lyrics in texts. But everyone is trying to put down a sound that people can hear, and know right away who's doing it. What do you think it takes to get that kind of sound?

ML: We don't really have a specific process; we work together, have fun with it, and allow the chemistry in the room to guide us, that way each voice, so to speak, is heard in the material. It's less about having a specific direction we want a song to go, and more about letting the song go where it wants to.

RRX: Under the Den sings originals and covers. Which is a versatile thing, because you never know what kind of gig you're going to get. But are there also drawbacks? Do you ever do shows that were a mix between originals and covers? Are there places

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you'd wish to do originals in, but they only want covers?

ML: Covers were always more an opportunity to have fun, or kind of live as another musician for a minute. We wouldn't say there are drawbacks to doing covers, but it has its challenges, chief among them being the trap of being viewed as a "cover band," which can be difficult to avoid. All of our cover gigs were always a combination of covers and originals, though, and fortunately the originals were consistently received well by both venues and audiences.

RRX: Gear isn't everything, but unless we're singing in the shower, we need it. And we have a relationship with our gear, people varying between exploring new frontiers because of that pedal, and getting frustrated that an amp buzzes. Do you all have any gear that you have strong feelings about, either way?

ML: The boys love their gear, and can be very particular about it - Ben is kind of a tone master and loves using his Line6 Helix to create the right sound on his Moniker guitar, Jay loves his Truth kit like it's a part of him, and John loves his Baby Blue.

RRX: It's tough to ask business question at any time, but we don't shy from tough. Music is not a business, but playing it enough is. Even if you aren't trying to make "day job" money, you're still trying to get out there. What does Under the Den do to promote itself? Where can we find out more about you?

ML: Most often we use social media platforms like Facebook, and word of mouth has actually served us well. We also like making handbills so the person has something tangible to connect with, and we all love coming up with the next great t-shirt design. We realize music, as a career, has become a much more involved

process, encompassing both the creation and marketing of your product, but as a band we have always been most concerned with making the product because we feel it speaks for itself.

RRX: We're the paper-bastard child of an online radio station (Radioradiox.com) and so I have to selfishly ask, what does your discography look like? Have you been able to get in a studio at all, or even your home studio? And if not, do you think it becomes more or less easy right now to put tracks together from remote?

ML: We have our EP, "All That Talk," which we recently made available on Spotify, and currently we are working on finalizing some new material for our second EP. We've done pretty well working remotely, but there's no replacement for in-person jam time so we were all very excited to get back to it last month.

RRX: This is where you answer the

question I didn't ask. What exactly is Under the Den? How many times have you had to play "Mustang Sally"? Educate, enlighten, emote – the floor is yours.

ML: As far as our cover act goes, we feel like if you're going to be a cover band you have to do it well, but you also need to make it fun. We always had fun with all our gigs, but our cover oriented gigs were more a means of making our EP a reality and after that goal was accomplished we decided to transition our focus to original shows. Not to say we won't do a cover gig, we really love performing so we will likely always do a few now and then, but this project was always about putting our own sound into the world so that's where we want to focus our energies now that we are getting back at it. As far as our original act is concerned, we're just like any other band - ourselves.



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# Fender Remembered

*Big Sandy & His Fly-Rite Boys Cover Freddy Fender.*

**BY ED CONWAY**

**A**lthough we haven't seen a new release of original music from our west coast pals, Big Sandy & His Fly-Rite Boys, it doesn't mean they haven't been busy. In a normal year, they spend a great deal of time on the road traversing the US, or heading to Europe on one of their several tours a year. Band leader and writer, Robert Williams also has been known to go out on tour with such notables as The Reverend Horton Heat. So it's not surprising there is

is a double 45 vinyl release, Big Sandy and His Fly-Rite Boys Sing and Play "The Songs of Freddy Fender", on Baldemar Records.

The quality of the sound is very good, which is expected from a crack backing band such as the Fly-Rite Boys, their skill and feel are second to none. Lead guitarist, Ashley Kingman has been with the band for about 30 years. Bassist Kevin Stewart, who has been a Fly-Rite for several years as well and blends smoothly with

Kingman to form the classic sound that the band is known for. Drummer Kip Dabbs fills out the rest of the band. While this line-up can make anyone sound good fronting them, Big Sandy himself has such a smooth as glass soulful voice that I can't think of anyone else who could do these songs any better, with maybe the exception of Fender himself. Of course there are the mega hits Fender is known for, "Before the Next Tear-drop Falls" and "Wasted Days And Wasted Nights", there are also two lesser known, but equally powerful tunes, "Holy One" (featuring Uncle Ernie Vargas, Alex Vargas and Li'l Ernie Vargas on doo-wop backing vocals) and "I Can't Remember When I Didn't Love You."

While each song has the feeling and love for the original solidly, the

little time to hit the studio. One of his pet projects, however, was doing a couple of Freddy Fender covers during the last few years live on stage. This naturally led to an idea to do a cover record of some of his songs. The result

highlight for me is the verse in "Wasted Days" that Williams sings in Spanish that brings the full emotion of the song to me, although I don't necessarily understand the words. It's impossible to not feel the love for the



(l-r) Big Sandy, Kevin Stewart, Ashley Kingman. Photo by Ed Conway.



song, specifically, and the performer in general that Williams brings. Anyone who is familiar with the band, knows how Williams' projects emotion into each of his tunes at live shows, but engineer, David Irish captures this quite nicely on the recordings.

I asked Williams a few questions regarding how he came to music in general and Freddy Fender specifically. He graciously sat down and responded while he had some time. Although he hasn't been touring, he has been co-hosting some Live Streams, such as The West Coast Ramble where the hosts have interviewed many stalwarts in the Rockabilly, and Western Swing world. Unfortunately, these are currently on hiatus, but you can check out previous editions on their YouTube channel.

RRX: What kind of music did you listen to growing up?

RW: I grew up in the 60s and 70s but mostly listened to the music of the 50s. Both of my parents had kept their teenage record collections and that's what I spent my time listening to. Generally it was 50s rock & roll and a lot of doo-wop and rhythm & blues.

RRX: When did you know you wanted a career in music?

RW: As a kid I would always daydream about being a singer in a band but never really thought that I would ever be able to do it. Later as a teenager, I saw James Intveld play and was in awe of the reaction that he would get from the crowd. That's what really drove me to pursue a career in music.

RRX: What was it about Freddie Fender's music that made you decide to do a double 45?

RW: I've always been a fan of Freddy through his records and from the experiences I had as a youngster tagging along with my parents to see him perform. I've always had thoughts of covering a song or two of his but for some reason, I never did until I

recorded a Spanish language 45 with Los Straitjackets - my first collaboration with them. The B-side of that record was a Freddy Fender song called "Que Mala". This current release is sort of a long overdue follow-up to that.

RRX: I noticed you chose two of his most popular tunes, but what was it about the other two?

RW: Well, I always wanted a chance to record "Wasted Days..." and "Next Teardrop..." his two most well-known songs, so I thought that it'd be cool to do versions of a couple of his lesser known B-sides. "I Can't Remember When I Didn't Love You" was the flip side of his original non-hit version of "Wasted Days..." in 1959, and "Holy One" was another late 50s song of his that is in more of a Doo-Wop vein - a genre that was one of my first musical loves.

RRX: What's next for Big Sandy & The Fly-Rite Boys?

RW: I'm trying to figure out what's next for me and the boys after we get past this unusual period of time. Gig and tour-wise, everything that was on the books for this year is being moved to 2021. Of course, it's a situation that keeps changing day-to-day, so we're keeping a close eye on that. During the lockdown I've been able to move quite a few copies of the Freddy release, and I'll be investing the income from that into our next record, which we'll probably be recording before we even get a chance to head back out on the road. In the meantime, I've been working on new material, but we might be doing a volume two of this release.

This double 45 release is available at BigSandy.net, but hurry, they already sold out their first batch and are working on their second. It is also available as an extended play CD.

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# Sweet Days for Composition

*Matt Donnelly has a long history with songwriting and the performing arts, and the proof is in the listening.*

**BY STEPHANIE BARTIK**



Matt Donnelly. Photo by Stephanie Bartik.

Who would have thought, the last normal day we had, would be on a Friday the 13th?

That was the day our lives became uncertain. We had to change our way of life. Isolate ourselves from friends and loved ones; leave our jobs; miss proms and graduations. No more strolling around the malls, no more basketball in the park---and, NO MORE LIVE MUSIC!

Living in an area so rich in local music, classic venues, and great bars and pubs, this hit our community with a punch so strong, it would leave Rocky Balboa on the mat.

But there comes a time when we have to not dwell on the darkness around us. Take a break, maybe find out a bit about the local musicians...to

that end, I have interviewed a few of our local music legends. Today, we talk to Matt Donnelly.

RRX: Do you see yourself as an artist or an entertainer?

MD: Probably both. When I'm playing in a club setting or a party, I think of myself as an entertainer (or at least try to be) In the studio or when in a setting that allows all original composition, I feel more like an artist. In those instances, I'm not trying to sound like a recording, I'm trying to sound like me. I have been very fortunate to have opportunities for both.

RRX: Do you consider rock as a music style as alive and vibrant as ever?

MD: Absolutely! There are exciting things happening in music and the

lines between rock, jazz, blues, soul, funk are constantly being played with. I recently went to see Snarky Puppy in Boston. The level of composition, playing and energy was just off the charts! Fred Tripp (drummer) and I run a blues jam every Thursday night (Pre COVID days). We've had a number of teenagers come in and just blow the doors off the place. They study Stevie Ray Vaughn and Led Zeppelin like it was part of their school curriculum, I wish I had their talent and discipline when I was their age.

RRX: Who are your examples and inspirators?

MD: I used to teach a unit called "Songwriting as Poetry" and we applied the same principles to understand my students' favorite songs as

we did for Robert Frost, Samuel Taylor Coleridge or Sylvia Plath. I believe poetry is the compression of meaning through words. It's more than  $1+1=2$ ; it's  $1+1=3+$ . "Gravity" by John Mayer or "One" by Metallica are good examples.

RRX: What got you to write songs? (childhood trauma, happiness, money?)

MD: I'm not a lyricist, but I love to create instrumental music. I've had the opportunity to participate in many, diverse recording projects including with Bob Warren and even a movie score many years ago. I was motivated by the beauty of the sound. I love applying my imagination and creativity to the musical form.

RRX: Can you remember the first time you wrote a song? Describe it to



me.

MD: In the '80s two friends and I wrote the soundtrack to the movie, "Brain Damage". Following that project, I was offered an opportunity to submit a musical plan for another feature film called Frankenhooker. I



really put everything into it developing a 'prospectus' of themes for the film. From a composition standpoint, I think it was probably my best work. In the end, they went with an award-winning composer, the same guy that wrote the score for Child's Play and The Buddy Holly Story. I later got to meet him, and he told me he listened to my tape and stole some of the ideas. I was flattered, but he didn't offer me any money.

RRX: Who gave you the support to keep writing in the beginning? Who did you play the early songs for?

MD: My mother was the person I played for in the beginning. She loved jazz and big band music, so I grew up listening to Billy Eckstine, Sarah Vaughn the Stan Kenton Band and Glenn Miller. I learned songs for her like "Tenderly", "God Bless the Child" and "Misty". I was always trying out

songs for her and she always made sure I had a piano to play on.

RRX: What do you feel like when you play one of your songs and people applaud? Is it an affirmation or an irritation?

MD: Again, song writing is not a huge part of my life today, but I still feel the same thrill in the music that I did when it was just to play music. Whether it was arranging for marching band or drum and bugle corps or working with Bob Warren to help him reach his vision, it just makes me feel amazing to be a part of the sound.

RRX: Tell me about a time when there were equipment issues that occurred during the middle of a song. What was the situation and how did you react?

MD: The Yes tribute band, Alice Frost was just getting ready to play at the Charles Wood Park a few years ago. The entire beginning of the show was on me. I played the intro music as a sample and then a huge synthesizer crescendo leading to the beginning of "Siberian Khatru". The soundcheck was perfect, I was ready to go. When I hit the trigger for the intro music, nothing happened! I freaked and tried restarting the computer, checking my connections...everything I could think of. I decided the USB sound interface was bad and I took the long headphone extension and plugged it into the headphone jack in the computer and the other end of the direct box. Success! It took my half of "Siberian" to get my heart out of my mouth!

RRX: Tell me about a time when you had to handle an unruly audience member.

MD: I was playing at a bar in Ticonderoga, a fight broke out and the entire bar emptied into the street. Our soundman kicked someone to get them away from the stage and broke the guys rib. I thought that would be it

*Continued on Page 26...*



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# The Fork that Splits the Heart in Two

*Poet Heather Bell Talks Verse, emotion, and changing the story in the middle.*

BY LIAM SWEENEY

**W**e join author Heather Bell, who's book, *Regret or Something More Animal*, is out in stores now.

RRX: I'm a fiction writer by trade, which means I spend my time trying to put emotions, including pain, into a life. But I've recently had time to write about something painful in my life. Your book, *Regret or Something More Animal*, is a poetry book about love, divorce, and the road between. Can you tell us about your time on this road?

HB: It's generally hard to think about, but what else do we do when we face hardship but to write our way through it? I was married for ten years to an abusive man. I have two kids from this marriage and it got to a point where I knew his behavior would affect my children as they got older. It's a big squiggly mess, if you had to draw it on paper. After my divorce I fell down the stairs in my new house I was renting. And I clearly recall crying, not so much from pain but from the knowledge that no one was going to hear that tumble and come see what the sound was.

Poetry was always a contentious divider in my marriage as he felt I wrote and published awful things about him. But what else is there to write? I used to wonder. Do better and I'll write better things. In my CLASH book, I often see it as this harbinger of

justice but also this diary of pain. Along the way I met my current partner Dan, who is a large furry bear sort of man. He's the sort of person who quietly picks you up off the floor when you are crying and asks no questions until you are ready. The poetry about him felt like a nest, a place to put my brain when it needed to feel goodness.

I wrote a lot in my marriage alone and at night as it was such a contentious act. Now, I usually can even write quickly on my phone while having conversations with people. It's like being in a cave, lost, then suddenly someone removes a boulder blocking the entranceway and you are free. And freedom is hard to deal with when you've been locked away so long. So yeah, write your way through it. It's where the clarity lives.

RRX: I've always marveled at how poetry can at the same time bring out deep truths to the reader while being presented in forms that take hold of language and, basically, twist it into a balloon animal. How do you balance the form of the art and your own expressive need?

HB: My need for? I mean, when I write I usually sit with a phrase or idea for a bit then just work it out. For me I hear the sounds in my head and determine placement and such but I also have my undergraduate degree in writing so I of course also have my



professors in my brain yelling about lineation and structure. Also I tend to write off and on. Through turbulent times or turns in which I feel deep emotions, I write constantly. When I am stagnant or have no "new" issues in my life, I won't write for months on end. Which I have always found interesting: my periods of absolute joy create no writing. My periods of absolute sadness, shame, even new love- I will create. That doesn't mean new love isn't joy, of course, but there is a deep contentment in a settled relationship wherein I simply allow the beauty to happen rather than try to decipher it through writing. So you could say I am perhaps at my worst, emotionally, if I am writing.

RRX: Marriage is so ingrained in our society as an ultimate life goal, like a thing to check off – house, good job, car, marriage – like a sign that you've come into the real world from the fantasy of youth. Yet almost fifty percent of marriages end in divorce.

Do you think societal expectation is a "third partner?"

HB: Yes, I think we romanticize it. I am unsure if I will ever get remarried. Both my partner and I were married previously and it ended in divorce. I know our children would like it, but I feel like it's only because they also see that societal expectation. As though a piece of paper and a different way to do your taxes solidifies love. However, I have been blessed that they (I have two kids and he has two kids) on their own have expressed that they feel they are siblings and we are a family. Maybe I am cynical, but that piece of paper never made me more loved or happier when I was married, so I know it won't now. It helps with clarity- that love is a choice regardless of whether you say a couple words in front of a crowd. Whenever I make choices now I think to myself what would my children think of these choices? And am I showing them the way to find themselves and find how to love in this



world? They all joke around that at about midnight every night I sit down and we have story time. I tell my stories, they tell theirs. We all listen. And by “stories” I mean tell me anything you want. I’ve learned a lot and I think they have too. They will ask for stories about my partner, which they usually find hilarious (he’s a silly sort of man!) but also quite serious when I tell them about how he protects me from anything that I was hurting from. They, in turn, tell me stories about things they have recovered from, have experienced, etc. And because we are a blended family, I always learn a lot as I know I am not always around. Stories are how we get to poetry. Poetry is how we translate love.

RRX: So let’s look into the past and the future for a second. What else by your hand exists? And what is on its way to existence? Are you strictly poetry, or is fiction (or non-fiction) in

the mix? How can our readers keep up with Heather Bell?

HB: I have done a short fiction chapbook in the past but it’s no longer available. To keep up with me I suppose just google my name and poetry? I write sort of on and off again, so nothing very consistent.

I feel like we all artistically have other interests. I love plants, my house is covered in them, the outside of my house is covered in them. They bring me solace when the world is so easily changeable.

As for non-fiction: isn’t that also my poems? Maybe sometimes. We all write our way through disaster as best we can. Long form never works too well for me. I tend to think of a book of poems as my long story.

I’m a writer and I’ve always been attracted to horror (although writing it is another thing altogether!). Just the idea that darkness is always at the corner of your vision.



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# Observations and Ramblings of a Cranky Old Guy

BY JEFF SPAULDING

Welcome back to the topic of the month, from a man facing reality, and yet I feel while you may not identify with the topic now, you will, sooner or later.

And frankly, it sucks.

This issue, we focus on two parts of my name, cranky and old.

As I mentioned earlier, I have been involved, professionally, which means the fools actually paid me, in the world of broadcasting, since 1977.

That's a pretty long time.

Doesn't mean I have gotten good at it, it's just that they haven't caught me yet.

Like many other careers: musician, bartender, pimp, I consider what I do to be much more like a paid hobby (notice I did not say WELL paid) than a job/career.

I love what I do, and have gotten well versed on many different aspects of the career, and at any time I am ready to always learn.

Fortunate that I have been doing what I do, with the exception of a few "unfortunate" situations, and I controlled my own destiny during said career.

Format changes, new owners, crap ratings, lawsuits, saying dirty words on the air, I got through them all.

This time however, my back is potentially getting pushed to the wall. Medicare.

The possibility of retirement. I turn 65 in January.

Can it be so long ago, as a young 21-year-old snot nosed punk that I was ready to conquer the world?

That was yesterday, many yesterdays.

I ain't ready to hang it up yet.

Turning 65, or rather prepping to

turn 65, is a massive pain to endure.

Once the government knows you're hitting that mark, your mailbox gets filled with more junk than weekly grocery store coupons and bargains.

Everyone who wants to sell you Medicare Supplemental insurance is waiting outside your door.

Your boss tries to be subtle and keeps asking how you're doing and if you're feeling ok.

Your kids are starting a pool to find out when they'll get your stuff, what they will get, and how much more will they get in their share than their siblings.

Without warning, your body starts hurting in little ways you never noticed before.

You take notice to commercials about stool softeners.

(Okay maybe that's just me but the body really starts to change/deteriorate once you hit your sixties.)

Now, if you are younger than I am, each decade brings new questions/statements depending on your age.

In your twenties, the world is your oyster.

In your thirties, you start to conform to society, cuz you think you can't function without doing so.

In your forties, you hope you did the right thing in life up till then.

In your fifties, you still think you have time to "make it."

In your sixties, you're stuck between "I'm immortal" to "I can learn to like government cheese" to "I am SO screwed, maybe it's time to try the homeless lifestyle."

Again, I ain't ready to hang it up yet, but day by day I find individual

life options are starting to lessen.

(Point of reference, I once LIVED on government cheese, and with a little spicy mustard, it ain't all that bad.)

So, you look at what is ahead of you and think "Well. It's all over sailor, if I accomplished what I set out to do decades ago, you can now start planning to spend your days in small claims court watching trials, or mall walking (as long as you bring your mask), and going to sleep with Pat and Vanna.

You ask then "How will YOUR life end up oh Cranky Old one?

Two words, Thuck Fat!

(Only way I can get them to print that)

My wife thinks I am crazy, my employer is a little scared, my friends are putting Vegas odds against me, but I am NEVER without a plan.

(Call it a bucket list to the final degree.)

In two years, at 66, if I can last, I plan to still be at my current radio station when they hit 100 years of broadcasting.

(No names please, but there is to

my knowledge just one AM station in the Capital Region who has been around that long.

That was/is the cherry on the top, to "end" a career at a joint with THAT much cred.

My next goal is financial, again, if I can last, if I stay working till 70, I get a bonus from Social Security.

Final, FINAL goal, if I can last, stay in the business, even part time, till age 71.

This is personal, at 71, I will have been in the business 50 years.

Ain't getting nothing for it, it's just a round number.

After that finally, retirement.

Wish me luck.

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I have been spinning Victory Soul Orchestra on my show at RadioradioX since I started here. The music is fun and undoubtedly danceable. I hate comparing groups to others but I certainly intend this to be a compliment, VSO has the talent of The Roots with more brass instrumentation. And... to top it off bringing in JB aka Dirty Moses on vocals was genius. So I am grateful to be speaking today with Joel Yannuzzi of VSO.

RRX: VSO has quickly become a favorite for me. For those who are just now discovering your music, tell us about yourselves... Who is Victory Soul

Orchestra? Introduce us.

JY: First off, thanks for the kind words! It's cool to know that we've reeled some people in over the years. Now onto, "Who is Victory Soul Orchestra?" The easy answer is that we are a group of Capital District musicians who won't stop going to the club to play music. We have jazz heads, a classically trained singer, a rapper, jam band vets and Albany rock staples. I started writing music for this band and realized I'd need a ton of great players. I was listening to a lot of afrobeat and soul and wanted to bring a full band into tiny little places. When we

# Victory Soul Orchestra Quality Musicians in Quantity

*Who knew that combining talent, genre, and showmanship would wow the crowds? A certain orchestra does...*

Victory Soul Orchestra. Photo by  
Bryan David Lasky.





started, our regular shows were at The Lowbeat and Pauly's. The lineup that we could fit on those stages was Sarah Clark, Justin Fuld, Ben Fedak, Joe Paparone, Ryan (Devo) Devine and myself. Eventually, we added conga/percussionist Nick Palazeke, tenor player Chris Russell, trombonist Dave Paul and rapper JB!! aka Dirty Moses. I know... this is an absurd amount of musicians on stage, but it's insanely fun to play arrangements that a big group can rip on.

RRX: With the state of everything still so very up in the air. How has the band been keeping busy?

JY: To no one's surprise, this has been a stressful time. We all have our struggles, but know that we are really lucky to be healthy and relatively sane. We tried our best to stay active this spring with writing. We did a collaboration with Josh Mirksy of Foster House Studios and Jamel Mosely of Mel E Media to record a studio session called Live @ Foster House w/ Victory Soul Orchestra and JB!!, right before quarantine. So getting this out to people was a high priority. I also had some new songs that I wrote for a singer and it wasn't until we met Dali Soto-Carruzzi that we were able to get them rolling. When we do get back to the stage (glass half full) you are going to love her.

RRX: So very few of us (musicians) have had the chance to do any real live performances in months, VSO however, had the opportunity to perform at Lark Hall on Juneteenth. How did it feel to be at the groundbreaking for our brand new holiday? How does it feel to be a part of something bigger than just the music?

JY: Juneteenth came together so quickly that I barely had time to think about it. We loved playing in that huge old room on that beautiful evening. I think we were all feeling in love with the idea of playing a show too. At the same time, that holiday didn't feel

celebratory. It was really close to George Floyd's and Breonna Taylor's murders and we had marched with our friends that week. My hope was that we were respectful of that holiday and maybe gave our friends on Lark Street an hour to dance and enjoy themselves.

RRX: So how many pieces do you have in your group? Ha-ha clearly doing it for the love of music. I respect that. When I was in a 4-piece band it was hard enough to get everyone to a

set together which will hopefully lead to recording some more. With the timeline as murky as it is, maybe it will be the reverse. Record first then play shows? What I can say is that we love the Capital District and plan on playing as long as there are audiences who still enjoy live bands. Don't get me wrong though, we want everyone to mask the hell up and keep their distance so we can do this the real way again someday. Dancing six feet apart just doesn't feel right.

"There are sometimes eleven members working to put on a show. These guys have day jobs, kids, dogs and turtles, so efficiency is key."

~Joel Yannuzzi

rehearsal, how do you do it?

JY: Organization my friend! There are sometimes 11 members working to put on a show. These guys have day jobs, kids, dogs and turtles, so efficiency is key. Charts have to be written before rehearsals because there's not enough time to figure it out on the spot. Don't get me wrong, there are some talented mf's in this town that can play any song top to bottom after hearing it once. Personally, I have to have it written to be able to manage and fine tune during that time. We all love playing to a packed house, so we're going to put in the time to earn those listeners. If we don't work on a set, it'll feel unnatural and audiences don't want that. Playing a bad show is a letdown for us. We're doing it for the experience too and want to milk a room for that good stuff... that sweet spot where listeners are happy and moving with you. We live for it!

RRX: So anything on the horizon?

JY: We're all in with putting a new

RRX: It really doesn't feel right. It feels surreal if you ask me. Well one thing I am sure we can all agree on musicians are writing like crazy. This world has given us so much inspiration and I can't wait to finally hear what everyone is working on. Thanks again for speaking with me today and we (as in everyone) are anxious to see VSO live again.

For more on Victory Soul Orchestra: [www.victorysoulorchestra.com](http://www.victorysoulorchestra.com)  
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# Garage Rock Needs a Passport and a Go-Bag

*The Bobby Lees are an up-and-coming band from Woodstock, and they have their sights (and volumes) set on global conquest.*



L-R: Nick Casa, Sam Quartin, Macky Bowman, Kendall Wind. Photo provided.

The Bobby Lees are an uncompromising garage-rock/punk band from Woodstock, New York. In a recent socially distant interview, the band wrote in to describe their recording process, their new upcoming record, and some interesting encounters at shows.

RRX: Obviously, everyone is still struggling in the time of COVID-19. For the past three issues, I've done

interviews while bands are stuck in quarantine. What have you guys been doing to combat this and stay creative

and positive towards your local underground scene?

SQ: We quarantined together the



first couple weeks so we wrote a bunch of new stuff. Took lots of walks, cooked, puzzles, stayed pretty positive. We're now trying to set up some outdoor shows at drive-ins/social distance shows with our friends' bands so hopefully we can get those going soon.

MB: Drawing still lifes while sitting on the toilet so as to keep my mind sharp while supporting the scene of the underground septic tank beneath my house.

NC: I'm nothing but a shell of a human now (Nicks having a tough time right now)

RRX: I notice you guys have very recently released a new track. What's

SQ: TIME!! We always want more time but we haven't been able to afford that yet in the studio. We had to rush, get all the songs recorded in a couple days and mixed in a couple days, that was a challenge. I'm hoping that for the next record we can get an extra few days.

MB: The main challenge is how expensive recording is. I can't speak for the others, but I'd say the other largest hurdle of recording is being forced to stare headlong at my lack of prodigious skill in the face of my inaccurately preconceived talent.

KW: We record on tape playing live so it's usually a quick process where each song gets only two to three takes before we move on. We worked with Jon Spencer of the Blues Explosion on our new record, and he opened our eyes to lots of different recording techniques, as well as experimenting with new instruments and sounds. His input enhanced the songs a lot. The biggest challenge with new content is exposure.

RRX: I see you have an album planned for release later this month, is there anything you want to say or promote about your upcoming release?

MB: Buy it. You will get limitless sex and money.

NC: please just try it out, everything hurts right now and it would really help if you'd give it a try

RRX: Listening to your latest single, I hear a

recording like for you guys? What are some challenges you face putting out content?

lot of early 70's punk/blues influence along with elements of garage rock. Parts of the song remind me of the

Dead Kennedys fused with some early 2000's rock. Is this a fair assessment/ what would you say are some of your biggest influences?

SQ: My favorites are Little Richard, Bo Diddley, The Gories, James Brown, Patsy Cline, Elvis, I also really like the 2000's bands like the White Stripes, The Hives, My Chemical Romance is one of my all-time favorites, the rest of the band makes fun of me for it.

KW: Garage rock seems to be the most accurate genre for us, but it's hard to say because I've never had an easy time describing the sound/ influence.

RRX: I heard you semi-recently signed to Alive Natural Sound Records; congrats! What's it like actually being signed and how has it affected your music?

SQ: it's been nice 'cause they can get our music to places we weren't able to with our first record, like all over Europe and stuff. It's also nice to have someone help with costs and printing of records etc. I don't think it's affected our music? They signed us when we had already finished recording this album, they heard it and wanted to put it out.

KW: There's some good and bad. It has helped a lot with exposure, as well as having more people to consult with about business decisions. But because more people are involved, you have to learn to compromise and listen to different opinions. Alive loved the record when they first heard it so our music has not been affected which is great.

RRX: What are your hopes for the future? Obviously it's hard to make plans in a time like this, but do you guys have any big future tour plans to promote your new material?

MB: Make enough money playing music so we can support ourselves solely by playing yet more music.

SQ: Playing shows again! We had

over 60 US tour dates booked for this spring/summer and our first European tour booked in France, Belgium and UK, all that got cancelled, so at this point just hoping to play shows again, rebuild the tours. For the US it's just us doing it, so it was like six months of work, hoping it will be a little easier the second time around.

RRX: I heard that you guys are from Woodstock, which is a nice town. Describe the local scene out there and some of your favorite venues.

SQ: The Colony in Woodstock, BSP in Kingston, and right now they're rebuilding a place called the Bearsville Theater which will host bigger shows. One of my favorite places here was a Chinese restaurant that had a stage, they'd let bands play while people ate Chinese food. That was our first show, but the restaurant/venue closed last year.

RRX: Are there any other local bands that you guys have bonded with over your career? Is there anyone you want to give a shoutout to?

SQ: My favorite local band is Hairbag, they're just the nicest dudes. In Ohio - Rat Motel and Radattack, In Detroit - The Stools, those are my favorites so far.

MB: There are some fantastic bands up here, but if I had to pick the bands that we've played with that I listen to most...it'd probably have to be either Rat Motel or Bundy and the Spins both from Ohio.

NC: HAIRBAG HAIRBAG HAIRBAG

RRX: Sometimes, it feels as though there is a cynical mindset surrounding the survival of a genre like punk-rock or garage-rock, with some people going as far as to say these genres are dead. What are your feelings about these sentiments? Do you feel that punk is thriving currently?

SQ: Definitely. I think anyone that

*Continued on Page 28...*





# Powers Park Rocks!

BY VITO CICCARELLI

I remember the day well in 2004, when Troy Deputy Mayor Dan Crawley called me into his office and said, “Dude, let’s get something going up at Powers Park this summer.” Dan was one of the architects of the Brunswick Summer concerts, and wanted to bring something similar to his old stomping grounds in Lansingburgh.

Working with Councilman Mark Wojcik, we put together two August shows for a trial run. We booked Kim Buckley for the first concert, and only drew about 40 people, with the second show (Vehicle), getting rained out. For season two, we did a six week schedule, adding food vendors, and Adirondack Sound Systems into the mix, drawing about 200-300 per show. Needless to say, the response we got from the community was encouraging enough for the city to build us a 20’ x 30’ stage to replace the splinter factory we had. For season three, we planned an eight week schedule; I decided to do our first country show (North 40 Band) to kick things off. It was one of those, ‘Let the games begin’ moments, with almost 1,000 hard core country fans filling the park. From there on in, it was off to the races with the series.

As its popularity grew, radio stations began approaching me to become involved as media sponsors, and the concerts then became a happening of sorts, due to the radio reach with the advertising. Keeping with the original plan to showcase the incredible talent within the 518, some of the top area acts were brought in, and the crowds just kept getting bigger and bigger. Groups like the Refrigerators, Skeeter Creek, Vehicle, and Emerald City brought in folks from

Western Massachusetts, Southern Vermont, NYC, and Western NY, with park favorites Renee’ Lussier, and Al Bruno always bringing a solid crowd of their enthusiastic fans yearly. Being we had an ever growing waiting list of excellent bands trying to get the opportunity to perform at the venue, the decision was made two years ago to get some new blood into the series. Since then, 14 of the 16 bands booked, had never played the series. Happily, the crowds have given us a positive response to the new direction we’ve taken.

I’m extremely excited to now have RadioradioX.com on the team as the official media sponsor for the event. Radio coverage is such an important part of getting the word out, and nobody does it better than we do at the X. Being we’re now playing up to 30 hours per week of 518 music, teaming up with the concert series was a no brainer. To keep everyone safe at the shows, we ask that you bring a mask for when you’re walking around the venue to the food vendors, or bathrooms. You are not required to wear one when sitting at your seat or standing in your own space, providing you are social distancing. Hand sanitizer will be made available, and we encourage the use of it. These rules will be enforced, as we’re not looking to get shut down in the middle of the season. Those who do not comply will be asked to leave.

So join us from August 1, through September 12, for a rock solid lineup with some of the top entertainers from the local music scene. Most importantly, for up-to-date information on the series, listen to the official radio sponsor for the 17th season of the Powers Park Concert Series, RadioradioX.com – playing #MusicThatMatters.



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# Discover the Bumping Friendlies

*For the Bumping Uglies, a fandom is a family that transcends the miles between them.*

**BY JETTA INTELLISANO**

**M**aybe a few times in a generation do you find a band or musician that truly resonates and mirrors your own experience in their music and lyrics. For me, this became true in discovering the “East Coast Beasts”, The Bumpin Uglies.

I first became familiar with Bumpin Uglies music by total chance, some might say serendipitously. I entered a Facebook contest and won tickets to see a great Albany NY band, The Victory Soul Orchestra who were opening for the Uglies that night. The

show was at a well-known venue located in downtown Albany. The Hollow Bar and Kitchen is a right of passage for any band playing through the Capital Region.

The Bumpin Uglies style of unfiltered, unapologetic East Coast Ska/Punk Reggae immediately caught my attention. Anyone who knows me, knows I am a sucker for a kick-ass horn section and raw, unfiltered reggae. I can say without a doubt I was hooked from my first experience with BU. What was to come in time, took me completely by surprise and changed me in a way that was totally unexpected. Directly after the show, I

ran into some other fans outside the Hollow, and helped them shoehorn their extremely toasted friend into their car. We all laughed and joked, I didn’t realize it then, but I had just been introduced to the “Uglies Nation” but we will get to that later.

So, like any fanboy I was on a mission for more, I followed every album they had on Spotify and my wife Kate and I began binge listening to their first full-length album, *Beast from the East*. The album includes favorites such as “All in Stride”, “Optimism in F#” and “City by the Bay”. Truly a phenomenal album full of emotion, deep, gritty lyrics and a sound sure to get you off your butt and on the dance floor and also a number one charting album.

Nearly two years after our

encounter with BU in Albany, my wife and I were active members in the fan-based group on FB, lovingly called Uglies Nation. What is truly remarkable about the group and its members is the absolute sense of family and brotherhood you feel. Not only fans, but most of the band interacts with members regularly, especially front man Brandon Hardesty, A.K.A. B-Hard. He performs weekly live streams for the fans on Tuesdays, takes requests and makes everyone feel a part of the band. Around this time my wife’s disease nearly took her life three times, we were scared, helpless and the one thing we held onto was our deep love of music to keep us out of our heads. One evening while Kate was in the ICU I contacted B-Hard and told him my story. I asked



Bumping Uglies in concert. Photo provided.



him if he would give a shout out to Kate on the next live stream, and Brandon wasted no time in expressing his sympathy and said he will call her out for sure.

Right before my wife went into her surgery, I messaged her and told her to tune in to Ugliers Nation for the live stream, as I had a surprise for her. After a few songs he played a deeply emotional song called “End” featured on the acoustic album Go Folk Yourself. The lyrics went on... “You, you will not get, you will not get a single tear, instead here’s a pint of blood, spread with a pen throughout 16 bars, my knees are weak, I’m seeing stars.” Right after the song he wished my wife well for all to hear on UN. This hit us hard and solidified my connection with the band.

Now, I tell you all this so you can understand why BU means so much to their fans, and thus began our mecca to the Mid-Atlantic for the BU’s

biggest party of the year, The Uglie Sweater Party at the Baltimore sound stage.

We embarked on the five and a half hour trip to Baltimore as a last minute birthday present to my wife. We let all of UN know we were coming. We were excited to connect with all the people we see online, in person. We arrived at the venue just in time for the middle set with fellow East Coast Beast, Joey Harkum, another amazing Maryland local and former lead singer/guitar for the powerhouse band Pasadena. The presales for the venue were already over 650 tickets sold earlier that day, and by the time we arrived, over 750 plus strong at The Baltimore Soundstage. Everywhere there was a sea of horrendous and hysterical ugly sweaters, roughly 90 percent of the crowd participated as B-Hard pointed out with joy in his eyes. This was also the largest headlining show for them to date, culminating “10 years in with

100 songs written, 10 years in, in a genre they don’t fit in” as noted in the song, “Radio” off Beast from the East.

The Ugliers began the set with Brandon coming out solo with his guitar and the beginning of “City by the Bay”, a melodic, happy song about their hometown area of Annapolis MD, followed by the rest of the band joining in. It was standing room only, and as we navigated the crowd attempting to get to the bar for a much needed beverage everyone, including myself, was belting out the lyrics back to a smiling Brandon Hardesty. Throughout the entire set the crowd participation was amazing, nearly the entire crowd was singing along to their favorite songs, such as “Yin and the Yang”, “All in Stride”, as well as a special treat of Brandon’s solo work as well. There was not a person standing still in the sea of faces at the Soundstage from the beginning to end.

One thing you will notice at their

shows is the camaraderie of the BU community, everyone is smiling, buying each other drinks or sharing a little of the flower between friends. I encountered no drama or ill will whatsoever, despite the heavy flow of lager and Jameson whiskey. I finished off the evening by the merch table bar sharing Jameson shots with the front man for the opening band, Joint Operation. Josh Lewis is fellow Baltimore native as well, with their newest single titled, “Banish” coming off their new album Scuffed, which is a wide array of rock, reggae and melodic vocals and guitar. Finally, after a few solo songs by Mr. Hardesty, the band closed out the night with an epic rendition of “Hard liquor” with members of the other bands getting up on stage and spitting a few bars. A fitting end to the amazing night.



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# The Duplex Planet

*A 'zine created by artist David Greenberger brought life to some, including itself.*

**BY LIAM SWEENY**

**T**he Duplex Planet was a 'zine created by artist Davis Greenberger in Boston in 1979. In its thirty-year span, it had captured an oft overlooked experience – that of the elderly. Its quirky nature endeared in to many, and the characters created in the Duplex Planet carried over into other media, such as books, comics, and spoken word.

We have been given permission by David to relay a portion of his TED Talk. Which is a first for us, but we're adventurous, so let's all have fun with it.

"The first funeral I ever went to was in 1979. I was 25 and I was working as an activities director at a nursing home in Boston. There was a man at the home by the name of Arthur Brown. One day, he took sick, was taken to the hospital, and he died shortly after that - all in a short span

of time. But he was 96, had lived a long and healthy life up till then. I asked around to see if anybody wanted to go to his funeral, and there was another man at the home who wanted to go; he

was the one who wanted to go. His name was Arthur Wallace.

"So the two of us set off to go to this graveside service. I borrowed a car. On the way there, it took a little longer

than I thought - I got a little bit lost - and the entire way there, Arthur was giving a sort of running commentary on skirt lengths and billboards and bad directions, and all the while, he was monkeying around with his hearing aid. that would fall out of his ear onto the seat, and he would jab it with a pen in some kind of a repair ritual and put it back in. It would fall out again. And the entire time he had a cigar that was not lit but was wet on

David Greenberger. Photo provided.





"Conversations are a way for two people to be in the same time and place as one another. And we extract the data from it, and we're left, then, with an emotional memory of somebody."

both ends. So this is who I was in this small container with for the time it took to find the cemetery.

"Finally found it, pulled in. There were a couple people standing by one grave site. I parked the car and helped Arthur out. There were a lot of leaves on the ground - it was November - and I walked him across the leaves over to where these people were standing. There were a couple of elderly women who were distant relatives of the deceased, and then there was a minister. And when we were through with these brief introductions, the minister then said a very short service.

At the end of that, he asked if anybody else wanted to say anything. And Arthur Wallace, who I brought along, wanted to say something. So he stepped forward from where he was next to me, and he said something like this: "Arthur Brown was a good man but funny thing was he didn't like bananas. Now when his lunch would come up on the tray, if there was a banana on it, he'd give it to me. I like a banana. I like a banana okay. A banana's my number two fruit. My number one fruit's a big, mild pear." And then he stepped back next to me. That was the first funeral I ever went to.

"So I should now tell you. how I came to be working in a nursing home in the first place. About a year before, I was on a cross-country trip and stopped in Palm Springs where my grandmother was spending the winter. I met a couple who were lifelong

friends of hers, the Feitlers. And Herb Feitler and I spent the better part of a day. sort of palling around. We went in his car. to flea markets in surrounding desert communities out there. And I just had a fantastic time. When I got back home to Boston, in considering this fantastic time I had, I realized that what made it unique was that it was the first time I sort of had made friends with somebody who was significantly older than me but wasn't in my family. And I liked that, and I thought I would like to do that again. I had just graduated from art school with a degree in painting, and I thought there was something I could do that would be better for me than scooping ice cream and delivering flowers. So I heard about a job at a nursing home as an activities director that somebody I'd gone to school with was doing and was going to be leaving the job. So I went there and applied, and I got the job - for 50 cents an hour less because I had no prior experience. But I started then, right away. It was in a residential, tree-lined neighborhood in Jamaica Plain, in Boston, and it was an old, converted duplex house, hence its name, the Duplex Nursing Home.

"And as soon as I set foot into this environment, I was just captivated with it. It was just filled with riveting bits of conversation that I had to write down, here being some examples: "I keep smoking, but what I really want to do is drive around in a stick-shift car."; "If a crow would see my picture, the crow would fly away."; "Mars will

probably be a state someday."; "I'm going to get me a fly, and I'm going to keep it in my room."; "The most important thing of human behavior is don't be terrorizing anybody."; "I heard a knock at the door, and I hung up on it."; "When you rake the yard, you rake the yard with a rake."; I love that one... "I can speak five languages, and I can also blabber."; "The weatherman says it's going to be cold tonight, so around. midnight, I'm going to cook up a pork chop in the moonlight. Doesn't cost too much to cook in the moonlight."; "My shoveling days are over, Davy baby."; "I'll smoke another cigar, by and by." And these became the basis for a publication I started. called "The Duplex Planet.

"I didn't know exactly where it was going, and in fact, I set aside painting. I felt like if this was to be something that I was to find my way in, I shouldn't have any other outlet that would allow that. I got the first issue together and gathered all the residents together one afternoon and handed out a copy to each one of them. Within about two minutes, they figured out that I wasn't also passing out cake or refreshments or something and most of them wandered away, discarding these. However, that night, copies that made it home with me roommates and friends saw, and I instantly got that this was for everybody but the people in it. Had it been more traditional oral history, it would have been a keepsake of sorts for the residents, but this was something else: this was characters springing to life on the page. So I got to know all 45 of these residents; it was an all-male nursing home, this place. Some were talkative; some were not. Some were agitated; some were calm. Some were very articulate about all manner of things, and some didn't really make a lot of sense in expected ways. And it was those latter ones who I was most interested in. I felt fortunate to be in close contact with people



who were going through that, and I came to see that they ended up not making sense. having made the same sense that we all make when we make sense. If that makes sense.

"I've had about a quarter-million conversations in my life, and I've forgotten almost all of them. Conversations are a way for two people to be in the same time and place as one another. And we extract the data from it, and we're left, then, with an emotional memory of somebody. I'm an artist, and I'm also somebody in the second half of my life, well into it, and I think I've learned as a human being and grown as an artist from continuing to meet people who are living the last years of their lives. The differences between us are obvious, but it's the things that we have in common that are the most fulfilling to me. That's where you find the surprise and the mystery and the truth."



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## Matt Donnelly (Cntd.)

*Continued from Page 9.*

for that club and that weekend. I started to pack up the band, but the owner pleaded with me to play the next night. We were all desperate for money so we all reluctantly agreed. The next night a huge and dangerous looking guy, rumored to be recently out of prison came in and demanded to know who broke his brothers' rib.

As I tried to calm him he explained to me that he wanted to shake someone's hand for finally putting his brother in place.

Lesson learned... sometimes the toughest guy can be your best friend if you treat them with respect and they want their brother hurt for some reason.

RRX: Walk me through the typical setup, warm-up, and break down procedures for your gigs.

MD: I show up 2 hours or more before a gig. Unlike musical theater where there is lots of warming up and pre-show green room preparation, it seems like I am putting in the last plug just as we need to start playing. I love places like Café Lena where most of the production is handled by their staff and you get a cookie!

Honestly, I hate setting up and tearing down, I wish I could play at a level where a production staff handled all that. Earlier this year I played on the Sandy Beaches Cruise, run by Delbert McClinton with the Bluz House Rockers. I literally could leave my cabin, walk around the corner and on to the stage where we played. All of the backline gear was provided. Now, that's nice!

RRX: Where do you see yourself in the next year, three years, five years and beyond?

MD: I once asked Hank Soto of the Stony Creek Band how much longer I could expect to keep playing.

He said you only have to answer two questions, "Can you play today?" and "Can you play tomorrow?" You keep doing that until you answer no to one of them. So far, yes and yes.

RRX: Is there anything else you want to add?

MD: I play for the love of music. It will always be a part of me. I have been given incredible opportunities to play with fabulously talented people and in a wild variety of styles. I would like to thank all the people that support music, live and recorded. I am a truly fortunate guy.

## The Bobby Lees (Cntd.)

*Continued from Page 18.*

says it's dead isn't very alive themselves. It's nine plus out there if you wanna look for it - The Stools from Detroit are a pretty amazing new punk blues band I found last year, they have a live album/tape where the MC is about to announce them and he says "I hear a lot of people say, 'rock and roll is dead man', you know what I tell them? I tell them to FUCK OFF. Come up and smell The Stools!"

MB: I think that people are too caught up with the aesthetic of any given genre while not caring so much about the context that it's made in. Garage rock will always be a thing because people will always have garages and rudimentary musical ideas that can flourish into something beautiful. The entire point of punk rock is to rebel against some kind of

societal norm that you think deserves to be deconstructed. Therefore punk will always exist in some form or another, it just won't look or sound like the Sex Pistols or the Ramones because the Sex Pistols and the Ramones already came along and made that aesthetic badass enough to be mainstream. I know that excludes us from the genre of punk, but that doesn't really bother me all that much.

RRX: What role do you believe politics play in modern punk/garage rock? What is your opinion on music having a message?

MB: I suppose to continue the last piece of guff that I said, the entire point of punk is to be political. Music that masquerades as punk that lacks any kind of message contextual or otherwise is not punk.

NC: I swear to god if another thing gets wrapped up in politics I'll start the revolution myself. I DONT CARE WHAT YOU THINK ABOUT AMERICA OR POLITICS JUST FORGET ABOUT LIFE FOR AN HOUR AND DANCE

SQ: I don't really care if there's a message or not, it's more if I believe the music or the person singing. If it feels honest and real, or like it has some pulse or electricity to it, I'm usually into it.

RRX: Describe the funniest show you guys have ever played (a standout, weird/funny moment from a show).

SQ: probably our first ever show at the Chinese restaurant. Only one person showed up. He sat at the bar eating noodles and watching us.

KW: When we played in Canton, OH, there was a teenage girl that carried around a really big stick all night and was dancing with it in the audience like she was a part of some sort of ritual. It was very bizarre.

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